

## CAFFEINE

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While reading this, you may be ingesting a large cup of hot black brew, commonly know as coffee. Coffee, in many people's minds, is synonymous with caffeine.

Caffeine is found in many foods and beverages that are consumed on a daily basis or, in many instances, an hourly basis. We rationalize the use of caffeine as a way to get the day started, a pick-me-upper, or an eye-opener. The effects are short-term, which may be why you continue to drink it. It is found in cola nuts, coffee, tea, cacao beans, mate, guarana (native to Brazil, common in Germany) and other plants.

Granted, caffeine is used widely for its mild stimulant effects. It can help keep you alert by increasing your heart rate and blood pressure. It's used in many over-the-counter medications and found in many soft drinks. But did you know that too much caffeine could cause insomnia? That's right, consuming as little as 250 milligrams around bedtime can cause restlessness, nervousness, and diuresis as well. A good rule of thumb is to avoid caffeine-containing foods and beverages for at least two hours before bed.

Caffeine is very acidic in nature and can intensify heartburn. When you are experiencing symptoms of heartburn, caffeine-containing foods and beverages should be avoided. Caffeine consumption has also been associated with decreasing bone mineral density at both the hip and the spine in women. Decreasing caffeine intake and increasing sources of dietary calcium are recommended.

Most nutritionists and health professionals agree that 300 milligrams of caffeine is a safe limit for daily consumption. This is equal to two or three cups of coffee. The charts below provide a guide to the caffeine content of some popular foods and beverages.

If you would like to decrease your caffeine intake, start at the rate of a half cup of coffee a day. This is known as "caffeine fading." Alternatively, you might try reducing coffee intake in discrete steps of two-five cups of coffee less per week. You could also try mixing half a cup of decaffeinated with half a cup of regular coffee. Remember to have substitutes available for drinking when decreasing caffeine in you diet. You might consider having hot chocolate or decaffeinated herbal tea instead.

In short, food and beverages containing caffeine are popular, taste good and serve a purpose. However, too much caffeine can cause problems. So make the appropriate adjustments to your hot black brew and make your life a little healthier.

### CAFFEINE CONTENT COMPARISONS:

#### Colas:

Java Water.....	140 mg
Jolt Cola.....	100 mg
Sugar-Free Mr. Pibb.....	58.8 mg
Mountain Dew.....	54 mg
Tab.....	46.8 mg
Coca-Cola.....	45.6 mg
Diet Coke.....	45.6 mg

Pepsi Cola.....38.4 mg  
(All servings 12 ounces except Java Water, which is 16.9 ounces)

**Coffee and Tea:**

Fresh Drip Coffee.....115-175 mg  
Brewed Coffee.....90-140 mg  
Instant Coffee.....66-100 mg  
Decaffeinated Coffee.....2-4 mg  
Hot Tea.....30-100 mg  
1.5 ounces Shot Espresso.....100 mg  
12 ounces Iced Tea.....70 mg

(All servings 6 ounces except as noted)

**Top Five Drinks**

Espresso.....66.67 mg  
Coffee.....11-29.17 mg  
Tea.....5-16.67 mg  
Jolt Cola.....8.33 mg  
Java Water.....8.28 mg

(All measurements per ounce)

**Pain Killers:**

Vivarin.....100 mg  
NoDoz.....100 mg  
Excedrin.....65 mg  
Anacin.....32 mg  
Aspirin.....0 mg  
Tylenol.....0 mg  
Cold Medicines.....0-30 mg

(Measurements per pill)

(Editor's note, Capt. Janetta R. Blackmore, Nutrition Care Division, William Beaumont Army Medical Center, contributed to this story.)